

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A method for the continuous maturation of beer after main fermentation, said maturation method comprising the steps of: passing unmatured beer, after removal of yeast and a heat treatment, through a bio-reactor comprising an upright column-type flow-through reactor containing one or more sieves, intermediate bottoms or flanges and which is filled with a carrier material having yeast immobilised thereon, wherein said carrier material comprises wood particles having a dimension of 1-100 mm; and maintaining said unmatured beer in contact with said yeast for a sufficient amount of time to reduce 90-97% of the diacetyl contained in said unmatured beer into acetoin.

Claim 2 (Canceled)

Claim 3 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles comprise deciduous wood.

Claim 4 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles comprise coniferous wood.

Claim 5 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles have been produced from tropical gramineous plants.

Claim 6 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the yeast used in the bio-reactor is one of conventional brewing yeast and highly flocculable yeast.

Claim 7 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the amount of yeast in the bio-reactor is 10^6 - 10^9 cells/ 1 cm^3 of particles.

Claim 8 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the temperature in the bio-reactor is 5 - 25 °C.

Claim 9 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the flow rate of unmaturing beer through the bio-reactor is 0.05 - 2 times the bio-reactor volume / h.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, further including the step of regenerating the particles after use using hot water or steam.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 1, further including the step of pre-treating the particles prior to immobilisation of the yeast.

Claim 12 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 11, wherein the particles are washed.

Claim 13 (Canceled)

Claim 14 (Canceled)

Claim 15 (Canceled)

Claim 16 (Currently amended): The method as defined in claim ~~15~~1 wherein a maximum dimension of the particles is 1-50 mm.

Claim 17 (Currently amended): The method as defined in claim ~~15~~1 wherein a maximum dimension of the particles is 2-20 mm.

Claim 18 (Original): The method as defined in claim 8 wherein the temperature in the bio-reactor is 5-20°C.

Claim 19 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 9 wherein the flow rate of unmaturred beer through the bio-reactor is 0.5-1 times the bio-reactor volume / h.

Claim 20 (Previously presented): The method as defined in claim 11 wherein the pre-treating step is further defined as subjecting the particles to one of a water soaking treatment or ethanol extraction treatment prior to immobilization of the yeast.

Claim 21 (Canceled)

Claim 22 (Canceled)

Claim 23 (Canceled)

Claim 24 (Canceled)

Claim 25 (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the diameter of the bio-reactor is greater than 0.75 m.

Claim 26 (New): The method of claim 25, wherein the diameter of the bio-reactor is in the range of 1.0 m to 4.0 m.

Claim 27 (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the height of the bio-reactor is greater than 2.0 m.

Claim 28 (New): The method of claim 27, wherein the height of the bio-reactor is in the range of 2.5 m to 10m.

Claim 29 (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the bio-reactor has a diameter in the range of 1.0 - 4.0 m and a height in the range of 2.5 m to 10 m.